



State of Alaska
Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry
2017 Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant
Manual

**FEDERAL GRANT DOLLARS FROM THE USDA FOREST SERVICE AVAILABLE
TO IMPROVE FIRE PROTECTION CAPABILITIES IN UNPROTECTED OR
INADEQUATELY PROTECTED AREAS.**

CFDA #10.664

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
Purpose – Overview	3
Eligibility.....	3
Evaluation Criteria.....	4
APPLICATION PROCESS.....	5
Application Forms and Instructions	5
Allowable and Unallowable Costs.....	6
Documentation of Match.....	7
Application Deadlines and Submission Process	8
SELECTION PROCESS	8
Selection Panel.....	8
Time Period Covered by the Grant.....	8
EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY TRACKING AND DISPOSITION	9
Equipment and Supply Purchase.....	9
Equipment and Supply Tracking.....	9
Equipment and Supply Maintenance	9
Equipment and Supplies Disposal	9
Equipment and Supply Monitoring	9
CONTACTS.....	10

Grant manual and application materials: <http://forestry.alaska.gov/fire/vfa.htm>

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE – OVERVIEW

The **Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)** program is funded through the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS). The objective of the VFA program is to improve the capacity and capability of rural and volunteer fire protection districts that protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the suppression of wildland fires.

A Volunteer Fire Assistance grant is an award of Federal financial assistance and is subject to USDA 7 CFR 2016, (A-102) Uniform Requirements, 2 CFR 225 Cost Principles, and OMB Circular A-133 as implemented by USDA Regulation 7 CFR 3052. All Federal and Recipient matching/cost share contributions are subject to all relevant Circulars and Code of Federal Regulations.

OMB Circulars are available on the internet at:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_default/. Electronic copies of the CFRs can be obtained at the following internet site: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>. If you are unable to retrieve these regulations electronically, please contact the Division of Forestry at 907-269-8471.

Public Law 95-313, Sec. 7; requires a 50% - 50% matching share, up to a limit of \$22,500.00. However a limit of \$7,500.00 per fire department has been imposed by The Alaska Division of Forestry so that more fire departments will have the opportunity to participate. Forestry will also provide match of funds up to 90% with 10% of the total project cost matched by the fire department. *Local non-federal matching funds must be available and documented when application is made. Please furnish the appropriate documentation of matching funds with your application. Failure to provide this documentation will be grounds for disqualification. Please see page 7 to see what qualifies as match.*

ELIGIBILITY

- To qualify, LOCAL FIRE AGENCY must be an established and registered fire department as determined by the Alaska Division of Fire & Life Safety or in the process of being established.
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY's boundaries **cannot** contain an incorporated city with a population over 10,000. The population of an area serviced by a fire department is not important, just as long as there is no incorporated city over 10,000 within the district boundaries.
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY should protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the suppression of wildland fires.
- It is preferable the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY be a party to an agreement with Forestry (as in mutual aid agreement) and/or a cooperative fire agreement with a USFS or Department of Interior (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Service or

Fish and Wildlife Services). **Please be prepared to provide a copy of the agreement if requested.**

- Projects that do not indicate improvement of the protection capabilities will not be eligible.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- **Call Volume** – One indicator of need is the number of fire runs made by LOCAL FIRE AGENCY. Since VFA supports wildland and structural needs, call volume counts should include both but **NOT** medical or rescue. The review committee will rely on data supplied by the applicant and by the Office of State Fire Marshal.
- **Alaska National Fire Information Reporting System (ANFIRS)** - Fire Reporting in ANFIRS is critical to capturing Alaska's statistics which in turn are forwarded to the US Fire Administration. These statistics play a huge role in the national formula used to determine how much VFA funding comes to Alaska each federal fiscal year. For more information visit: <http://dps.alaska.gov/fire/anfirs.aspx>
- **VFA Award Previous Years** – Fire departments must be current on the past 5 VFA grant awards in order to be eligible for this year's program. This means providing proof of expenditures (invoices, receipts, cashed checks) for last year purchases to local Forestry office. Rotating funding to more fire departments by limiting back-to-back years of VFA funding is another way to attempt to distribute dollars more equitably. Although this may be disruptive to long-term plans for a fire department to stretch purchasing over several years, the opportunity for funding more fire departments is the goal. Awards will be made to maximize the number of rural fire departments that will benefit from this program.
- **National Incident Management System (NIMS) Compliance** – NIMS training is required under Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD-5) to receive federal funding, contracts, grants, training, and reimbursement of disaster recovery funds. For details visit: http://fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/nims_training_program.pdf

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute offers FREE on-line NIMS- complaint training ranging from 1-3 hours in length. For a course list , visit: <https://training.fema.gov/nims/>

For the purposes of the VFA grants IS-700.A, IS-100.B, IS-800b, IS-200b will meet the requirement.

Please attached certificate(s) or a letter certifying NIMS compliance.

No one criterion listed above will assure or eliminate a fire department from funding. A combination of these factors will be part of the evaluation.

APPLICATION PROCESS

APPLICATION FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Application materials will be available electronically at <http://forestry.alaska.gov/fire/vfa.htm> and by mail as requested. The application form can be completed manually or electronically. The first three pages will provide the selection committee with the criteria needed to properly evaluate the application.

- Applications received after the deadline of January 31, 2017 will not be considered.
- Applications not submitted on a current 2017 VFA application form will not be eligible.
- Each applicant must meet the match requirements. This means that for every VFA grant dollar, a 10% or higher match (cash or in-kind; refer to page 7) dollar must be provided by the fire department. The total “project” value is 100% (90% VFA / 10% match).
- A State of Alaska (SOA) Vendor Number is now required in order to send VFA checks to successful applicants. SOA Vendor numbers can be obtained at: <http://doa.alaska.gov/dof/iris/vendor.html> Please obtain a vendor number prior to submitting an application.
- The YES and NO boxes on the application can be “checked” by double clicking (electronic version) on the box.
- Page 2 of the application has three-dollar amount columns.
 - **Total Cost:** The actual cost of the items being applied for purchase.
 - **Cash match:** Dollars spent to purchase items included on the grant and documented on the invoice. The cash supplied for the balance of the purchase will satisfy the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY match requirements.
 - **In-kind match:** The LOCAL FIRE AGENCY non-monetary matching portion of the grant award that has measurable value and is donated or volunteered. These contributions may be used when cash match is not available for the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY share of the matching funds.
 - LOCAL FIRE AGENCY can use both cash and in-kind match in the grant application.
- The columns automatically total at the bottom (Total Cost, Matching Share Amount).
- Group items as much as reasonably possible, yet being specific enough to provide information to the selection committee is encouraged. For example, if LOCAL FIRE AGENCY wants to purchase wildland hose it can be listed on one line: Wildland Hose – 4-1’x100”, 1-1½”x50’. Same listings apply for nozzles, adapters, etc.
- A vendor PPE package is one-line item, do not list items within the PPE package separately. Only a vendor PPE package can include footwear.
- Attached additional sheet if items requested exceeds 8.
- Page 2 of the application has a **DOF USE ONLY** shaded column that will be completed at the time the selection committee meets and makes decisions on particular items eligibility. Do not fill this column in.
- The application form must be signed by an authorized agent of the fire department (Fire Chief, Treasurer, or Board Chairperson). If the application is submitted electronically, please scan the application and submit by email to your nearest Forestry Office. If the application is not submitted by the signatory on Page 3, please copy the signatory on the email to acknowledge their approval.

ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS

COST ITEMS	ALLOWABLE	
	YES	NO
Organization improvements, such as LOCAL FIRE AGENCY legal and administration fees, election costs, or advertising used to form a <u>new</u> rural fire protection district. This does not include wages or payments resembling employee payments.	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland</u> fire-fighting supplies such as basic tools, fire line hand tools, hose, adapters/reducers, fittings, valves, pumps, nozzles, fold-a-tanks, portable tanks, chainsaws, hydrant wrenches, SCBA systems (allowed but a low priority item for funding), generators and weather kits.	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland</u> training expenses, such as instructor fees, travel expenses, tuition costs, classroom materials for either basic or advanced courses.	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland</u> equipment, repairs, upgrades, or safety improvements for the acquisition or modification of firefighting equipment, which may include labor and materials. The use of grant funds to pay FEPP fees or to improve FEPP equipment is appropriate (including costs of transportation or acquisition charges). For these purposes only, “ equipment ” is considered rolling stock or vehicles such as engines, tankers, tenders, etc. that actually are used directly in putting a fire out. Homeland Security/FEMA may also prove to be another funding resource.	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland</u> basic PPE, such as new generation fire shelters, fire resistant shirts and pants, hard hats, eye protectors, gloves, boots (only if part of a PPE package from a vendor) and turnouts.	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland</u> communications equipment, such as narrow band or narrow-band compatible hand held or vehicle units, pagers and accessories and Global Position Units (GPS). All communications equipment must be P25 compliant or compatible.	YES	
Freight or shipping costs for allowable items.	YES	
Acquisition of land.		NO
Construction or remodeling of buildings or any work on “real” property (such as wells). Pressurized waterlines and hydrants.		NO
Emergency <u>medical</u> equipment, rescue equipment or extraction equipment (VFA funds are for fire use only). Examples: Cut Off Saw, Spine Board.		NO
Personnel wages (as in employees on a payroll) will only be funded if they relate to “instructor fees” for training project activities. These grant dollars are not intended to pay for wages, salaries, stipends or other volunteer/employee payments unless it relates to being an instructor. Utilities, fuel and other normal operating expenses.		NO
Office equipment, computers, software, cameras.		NO
Footware/Boots NOT associated with vendor PPE package.		NO
Any single item costing over \$4999.99.		NO

DOCUMENTATION OF MATCH

The VFA program requires that grant recipients of federal grant monies to provide either matching dollars or in-kind match. At the time the application is submitted, match will be identified and documented as cash (deducted from the total cost) or in-kind (described in the detailed information provided below).

- **Cash Match:** Dollars spent to contribute towards the project. Equipment or supplies purchased that leverages the intent of VFA funding.
- **In-kind Match:** Volunteer hours for work done on the project items (like installing a pump or attending a training session), donated space for holding a training session and donated labor from a vendor providing one of the items purchased under the grant. Donated labor or volunteer hours can be calculated at the EFF-3 rate of \$14.73/hour. Documentation needs to be provided for in-kind match, such as:

Description	Documentation Examples & Description
Volunteer Hours	Membership, Fire Defense Board, or board meeting sign-in sheets that show the purpose of meetings, date of meetings, length of time and a list of names.
	Training roster sheet that shows: type of training, name of instructor, date, length of time, list of names.
	Any kind of log showing a person's name, date and time worked and activities performed. (Do not use if individual's occupation is a mechanic; use professional time.)
Donated supplies	A receipt showing item, cost, date, and signature of person making the donation. A donation receipt from the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY would be best.
Donated Professional Time (mechanic, attorney, physician, etc.)	Individual must provide an invoice that shows business name and address stating time donated by dates and hours and activity performed. In addition, state the occupational hourly/daily rate for services provided.
Donated Use Time (meeting hall, mechanic shop, etc.)	Individual must provide an invoice that shows business name and address stating time donated by dates and hours and activity performed. In addition, state the occupational hourly/daily rate for services provided.
Mileage	Mileage will be reimbursed according the State of Alaska rates for the corresponding timeframe. Proper documentation includes miles driven, destination, purpose, and driver. Current mileage rates are \$0.575 per mile for vehicles and \$1.310 for airplanes.
Unallowable match	Response to actual fire dispatches, hazard mitigation activities, medical dispatches, training associated with medical or extrication exercises.

APPLICATION DEADLINES AND SUBMISSION PROCESS

Applications must be **received** no later than 5 pm **Tuesday, January 31, 2017** via:

- **Email** with attachments to local FMO as indicated in letter. This is the **preferred** submittal method.
- **Fax** to local Forestry Office. The fax machine tends to be bogged down with incoming applications on the deadline day.
- **Mail** to local Forestry Office. Submit only ONE copy. **DO NOT submit multiple copies (i.e., fax and U.S. mail delivery). Must be postmarked by January 31, 2017.**
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY will receive their award status by May, 2017 or sooner.

SELECTION PROCESS

SELECTION PANEL

Any unallowable items will be identified in a pre-review process at the local Forestry Office as well as a committee review process. It is expected a multi-agency group will meet in or April or May to review the applications and may include representatives from:

- USFS/DOI reps/AK Fire Chief's Association
- Alaska Division of Forestry staff and field representatives

TIME PERIOD COVERED BY THE GRANT	DEADLINES
• Applications Due:	January 31, 2017
• Fire Departments receive Notice of Award:	May 2017
• Checks Cashed	Within 90 days of issuance
• Purchasing complete:	October 30, 2018
• Submittal of 2017 receipts, proof of purchase (s): to local Forestry Office FMO	October 31, 2018; preferably sooner
• Time period in which documented In-kind Match must fall:	November 1, 2015 – October 31, 2016

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY TRACKING AND DISPOSITION

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY PURCHASE

The Division of Forestry will **not** fund any single item over \$4999.99. Equipment and supplies will be purchased at the most beneficial price and use of GSA purchasing is encouraged. If this is not possible, competitive bidding procedures or multiple price quotes may be utilized. Ownership purchased with VFA grant funds vests with the fire department.

TRACKING

As a federal grant recipient, LOCAL FIRE AGENCY is responsible to track all equipment and supplies purchased with VFA funding with a \$2500 or more purchase price for a single item for a period of five years from date of purchase. Therefore, the grant recipient needs to have a tracking or inventory system in place in order to meet these requirements. However, if any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit or other action involving the records has been initiated prior to the end of the five-year period, the records shall be kept until all issues are resolved or until the end of the five-year period, whichever is later. Equipment and supply tracking records will include the grant year purchased, a description of the property, serial number or identification number, source of the property, acquisition date, cost, percentage of Federal participation, location and any ultimate disposition information, including the date of disposal and sale price, process of disposal (retained, sold, or traded in) and, if applicable, new owner. LOCAL FIRE AGENCY is also responsible to conduct a physical inventory of VFA funded equipment and supplies at least every two years and the results reconciled with the tracking records.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY MAINTENANCE

Equipment and supplies must be maintained in good condition.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES DISPOSAL

A competitive public process should be used to facilitate the sale of equipment and supplies and, therefore, no private or individual sales meets criteria. Equipment with a fair market value per unit of less than \$5,000 is considered a supply and may be retained, sold, or otherwise disposed of with no further obligation to the awarding agency. LOCAL FIRE AGENCY are encouraged to insert documentation into the grant file for any equipment that is under \$5,000 in value for future reference and documentation of how the value was determined.

For supplies that are unused with a residual inventory exceeding \$5,000 in total aggregate fair market value upon termination or completion of the award and if the supplies are not needed for any other federally-sponsored programs or projects, LOCAL FIRE AGENCY are required to compensate the awarding agency for its share of the fair market value. If LOCAL FIRE AGENCY plans on selling or transferring a piece of equipment, please contact the Fire Staff Officer before proceeding. Documentation will need to be provided, such as a letter with the proper documentation elements requesting approval to sell or transfer equipment. Any costs associated with the sale can be deducted from the sale price (advertising, repairs to prepare for sale, etc.) in order to identify the actual dollar amount to be returned to the federal agency.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY MONITORING

The STATE is obligated to ensure adequate equipment and supply tracking and disposal procedures are in place by recipients of VFA funds. Therefore, on-site monitoring visits will be conducted on a random sample of recipients annually. The basis of the monitoring visits will be to review equipment and supplies acquired over the previous five years, along with proper disposal documentation.

DOF CONTACTS

Western Alaska

550 West 7th Suite 1450,
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907)269-8471

***Arlene Weber-Sword, Fire Staff
Officer***

arlene.weber-sword@alaska.gov

Fairbanks Area Office

3700 Airport Way
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-4699
(907) 451-2600

Ed Sanford, Fire Mgmt. Officer

edward.sanford@alaska.gov

Delta Area Office

PO Box 1149
Delta Junction, AK 99737
(907) 895-4225

Mike Goyette, Fire Mgmt. Officer

michael.goyette@alaska.gov

Tok Area Office

Box 10
Tok, Alaska 99780
(Mile 123 Tok Cutoff.)
(907) 883-5134

Peter Talus, Fire Mgmt. Officer

peter.talus@alaska.gov

Valdez/Copper River Area Office

P.O. Box 185
Glennallen, Alaska 99588
(907) 822-5534

Gary Mullen, Area Forester

gary.mullen@alaska.gov

Mat-Su Area Offices

101 Airport Road
Palmer, Alaska 99645
(907) 761-6300

Norm McDonald, Fire Mgmt. Officer

norman.mcdonald@alaska.gov

Southwest District

101 Airport Road
Palmer, Alaska 99645
(907) 761-6302

Norm McDonald, Fire Mgmt. Officer

norman.mcdonald@alaska.gov

Kenai/Kodiak Area Office

42499 Sterling Highway
Soldotna, Alaska 99669
(907) 260-4200

Howie Kent, Fire Mgmt. Officer

howard.kent@alaska.gov

Northern & Southern Southeast Area Offices

P.O. Box 263 (Gateway Building)
Haines, Alaska 99827
(907) 766-2120

Greg Palmieri, Forester

greg.palmieri@alaska.gov